

Aspira

OF NEW YORK, INC.

Celebrating Our 25th Anniversary

JULIA E. RIVERA
3 HAVEN PLAZA, #16G
NEW YORK, NY 10009

ASPIRA 25 YEARS OF ACHIEVEMENT

In 1958 the vision of a group of Puerto Rican educators and other professionals was soon to become a reality. These individuals were committed to the idea that poverty could be overcome by developing the educational and leadership potential of Puerto Rican youth. Moreover, they believed that the Puerto Rican community needed to develop a professional, managerial and technical group at a much faster rate, and that from this group, its future leaders will emerge.

An institution was needed that could foster both the educational attainment and social responsibility through leadership development. The concept was called ASPIRA and it took a dynamic Puerto Rican educator by the name of Dr. Antonia Pantoja to sell it to major private foundations. A series of grants led to the opening of an ASPIRA Office in New York City in 1961.

During its early, formative years, ASPIRA's growth was phenomenal and its impact on the Puerto Rican community considerable. By 1966, at the height of President Johnson's "War on Poverty," it had branched out from a small office to three functioning centers in the Bronx, Manhattan and Brooklyn, and was building a reputation as a major community organization—a fact recognized in writing by both Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and Rev. Joseph Fitzpatrick at Fordham University. Youth then, who were to become today's leaders, joined the growing ranks of "ASPIRANTES" organized in ASPIRA Clubs at numerous city high schools.

In 1968, ASPIRA sought to address nationally the same problems that Puerto Ricans were experiencing locally, establishing ASPIRA of America with a grant from the Ford Foundation. Individually incorporated offices were eventually opened in New Jersey, Illinois, Puerto Rico, Pennsylvania and Florida, and were affiliated through ASPIRA of America. The original office established in 1961 was now formally called ASPIRA of New York.



The 1985 Eleanor Roosevelt Community Service Award presented to ASPIRA of New York.

Amid the political turbulence of the late 60's and early 70's, ASPIRA entered its second decade as a respected advocate for the educational rights of Puerto Rican and other Hispanics. In August, 1974 a landmark decision was handed down by the U.S. District Court that would affect the lives of thousands of New Yorkers. Called the ASPIRA Con-

sent Decree, the result of a suit ASPIRA filed against the N.Y.C. Board of Education in 1972, it established the right of people with limited English proficiency to receive bilingual education. The case also established principles which guided the development of bilingual programs. The effects of the ASPIRA Consent Decree have been far-reaching, touching into more recent ethnic and racial communities where bilingual education is a critical necessity.

Throughout its 25-year history, ASPIRA commissioned major studies and reports on the condition of education of Puerto Ricans. Perhaps, the most shocking was a report released in 1983 which revealed the depth of the dropout problem in N.Y.C. public schools. The report, entitled "Racial & Ethnic Dropout Rates in New York City," stirred serious debate on the dropout issue among educational policy makers and raised awareness of the need for a concerted effort to devise programs addressing it.

But even with these achievements, ASPIRA's main purpose and mission continues to be educational services, and development of youth for leadership roles in the Hispanic community. ASPIRA is still the leader in the counseling and placement of Hispanics into higher education, and keeping them there through financial aid programs.

ASPIRA, throughout its 25 years, has remained in the forefront of agencies serving the Hispanic community and today continues to uphold its philosophy of "Excellence Through Education."

Dr. Antonia Pantoja wrote in 1965 that "The wealth of the Puerto Rican community is in the potential of its youth. Through aggressive educational orientation programs, ASPIRA pursues the goal of making the potential into a reality."

As ASPIRA celebrates its Silver Anniversary, those principles remain unchanged.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

It is both a great honor and privilege to be serving as Chairman of ASPIRA of New York on the occasion of its twenty-fifth anniversary. Clearly, the achievement of such a milestone in the history of an organization like ASPIRA is a testament to its enduring importance to the Hispanic community, as well as to the socio-economic life of New York.

In celebrating our silver anniversary, we pause to reflect on the organization's many accomplishments and are sincerely proud of the recognition we have received from both private and government institutions, including Coca Cola, U.S.A. which noted in a nationwide study that ASPIRA was found to be "...the organization best able to meet the needs of the Hispanic community." We were further honored in the past year to receive the Eleanor Roosevelt Community Service Award presented by Governor Mario M. Cuomo, and most recently, by the New York State Association of Black and Puerto Rican Legislators, Inc. which presented ASPIRA an award for distinguished community service.

To be sure, such recognition should and does instill pride in those of us who have labored at ASPIRA over the years to make the organization viable and responsive. More importantly, however, this recognition is a vote of confidence in the validity of the ASPIRA Process—the need for which is as evident today as it was in 1961. Far too many of our community's people languish in conditions of poverty, and the ASPIRA Process with its emphasis on creating a professional, committed community leadership through youth education and development, remains our best hope to reverse this situation.

We need only look for encouragement at our many alumni who are living proof that the ASPIRA Process works. It is especially gratifying when we see former "Aspirantes" occupying positions of responsibility in the professional world, while providing support to their community by contributing their time and energies to community organizations, including ASPIRA itself.

In assessing both the immediate and long-term future, we must note the new challenges facing our youth today, and the need for ASPIRA to be responsive to these challenges in the fulfillment of its mission. Our research into the dropout problem has shown that students are leaving school in greater numbers at a time when the marketplace is demanding greater skills. The success of ASPIRA's pilot dropout prevention programs at Morris High School in the South Bronx and in Eastern District in Brooklyn have strengthened our view that this type of programmatic approach should be replicated in other target areas.

Of course, this and other program initiatives cannot be accomplished without the on-going support of the private sector. It was the support of a handful of bold foundations and corporations back in the early 60's who believed in ASPIRA's philosophy that made its founder's dream a reality. Over the past 25 years, ASPIRA's relationship with the private sector has resulted in tens of thousands of Hispanic youth being placed in higher education and returning to serve their communities and work for many of these same donors. We take this opportunity to acknowledge our corporate and foundation supporters for continuing to believe in the ASPIRA Process, and look forward to a renewed enthusiasm in helping us to meet the many challenges that lie ahead.

As ASPIRA looks ahead to the next 25 years, and the rapid technological changes that are having a most profound effect on our society, we affirm our most basic commitment: to build a professional leadership to insure the Hispanic community continued growth and development.



William Radinson

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to all of you as we celebrate this most historic occasion.

During ASPIRA's 25 years of service to the Puerto Rican/Latino community many individuals have benefitted greatly from the untiring efforts of the Board and staff to improve the quality of life of all our citizenry.

Most specially and with great pride we have made it possible for our youth to strive for excellence in education and to pursue fulfilling careers in both the public and private sectors; accomplishments made possible in spite of the serious economic, political and social climate of conservative philosophy and restrictive class-consciousness.

Within this reality, ASPIRA has met the challenge of standing firm and aggressively responding to the needs of poor Black, Puerto Ricans and other minorities who are the human capital of the community. We have successfully weathered political storms because of our belief in and commitment to the presevation and development of our communities.

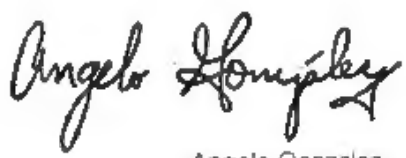
As I prepare to leave ASPIRA I cannot help but feel confident in knowing that the organization's staff, students and Board of Directors will continue to persevere against all odds to maintain the high standards of achievement and service to our community that we have worked toward during my four years as Executive Director.

I take pride in the accomplishments of the past four years. ASPIRA has reestablished its prominent position as a major Hispanic educational service delivery and advocacy institution, and has continued to professionally fulfill its mission of developing a well-educated and committed Puerto Rican leadership to work toward social, political and economic opportunity for our community.

To those of you present tonight, many thanks for your expressions of confidence and support.

To our sisters and brothers from the diverse community organizations joining us tonight, many thanks and best of luck.

To the staff of ASPIRA, a very special thanks—you are what makes ASPIRA a working reality. Adelante!!



Angelo Gonzalez



STATE OF NEW YORK
EXECUTIVE CHAMBER

MARIO M. CUOMO
GOVERNOR

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NEW YORK, N.Y. 10047

Dear Friends:

I wish to take this opportunity to offer heartfelt congratulations to ASPIRA of New York, Inc., on the occasion of its 25th Anniversary Dinner.

ASPIRA has had a remarkable history of success over the years, having served more than thirty five thousand students, and advocating on behalf of New York's Puerto Rican community for enhanced educational services.

Its leadership in the fields of Bilingual Education, Dropout Prevention and Leadership Development has been recognized by educational and community leaders throughout our great state.

ASPIRA can be proud of its many accomplishments. I look forward to working with this exceptional institution as we make New York State a better place to live and work.

Best wishes for continued success.

Sincerely,

Mario M. Cuomo
Governor

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For their generous support of ASPIRA's Twenty-fifth Anniversary we express our sincere appreciation to

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Vice President, Director of Corporate Affairs
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Avon Products Foundation, Inc.
for sponsoring the kickoff luncheon

Banco de Ponce
for all their in-kind support

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for underwriting a New York Times ad

The Equitable
for the printing of the dinner program, invitations and stationery

Philip Morris Companies Inc. for underwriting this evening's entertainment

Philip Morris Salutes

Aspira of New York, Inc.

ON THE OCCASION OF ITS 25th ANNIVERSARY

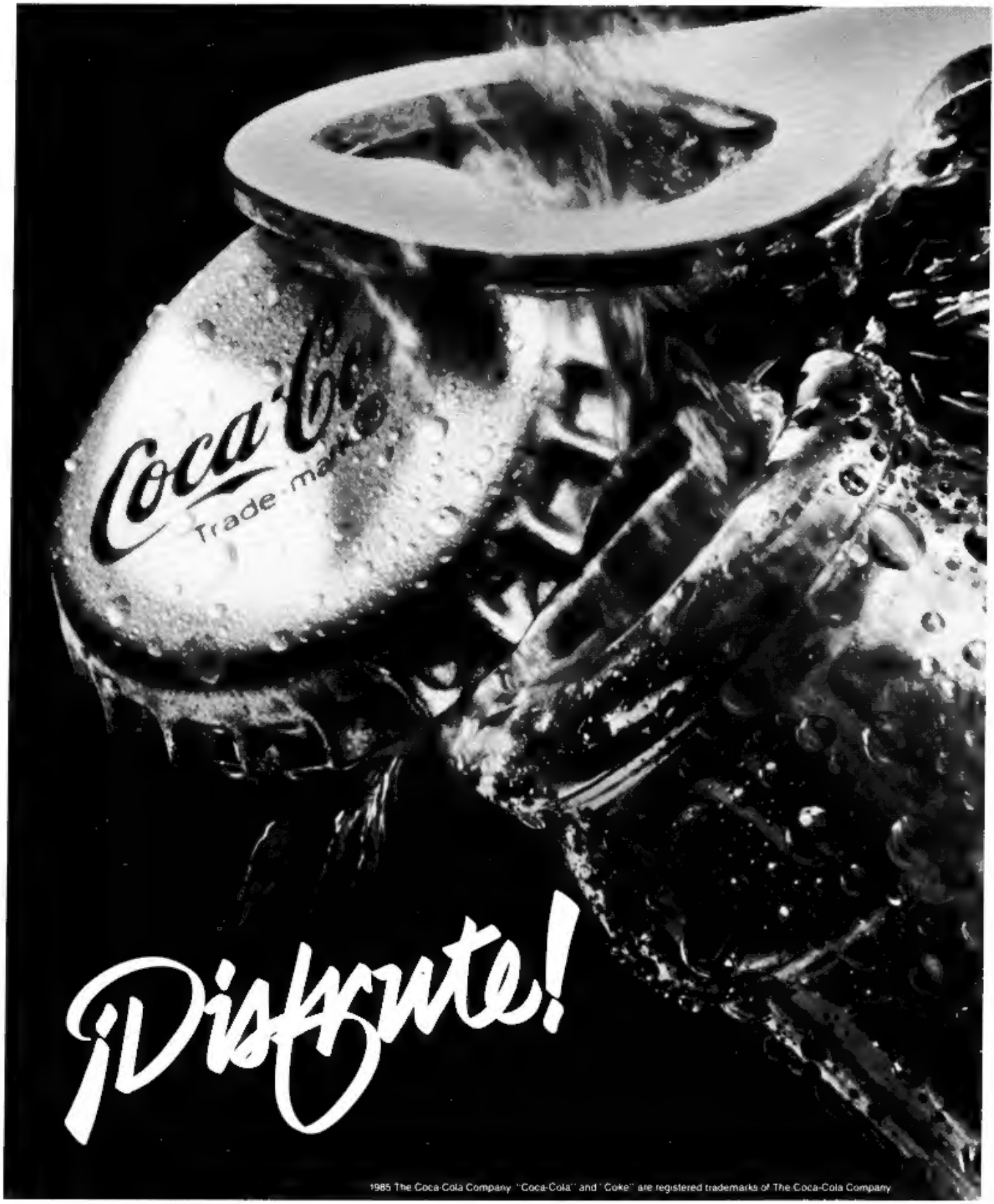
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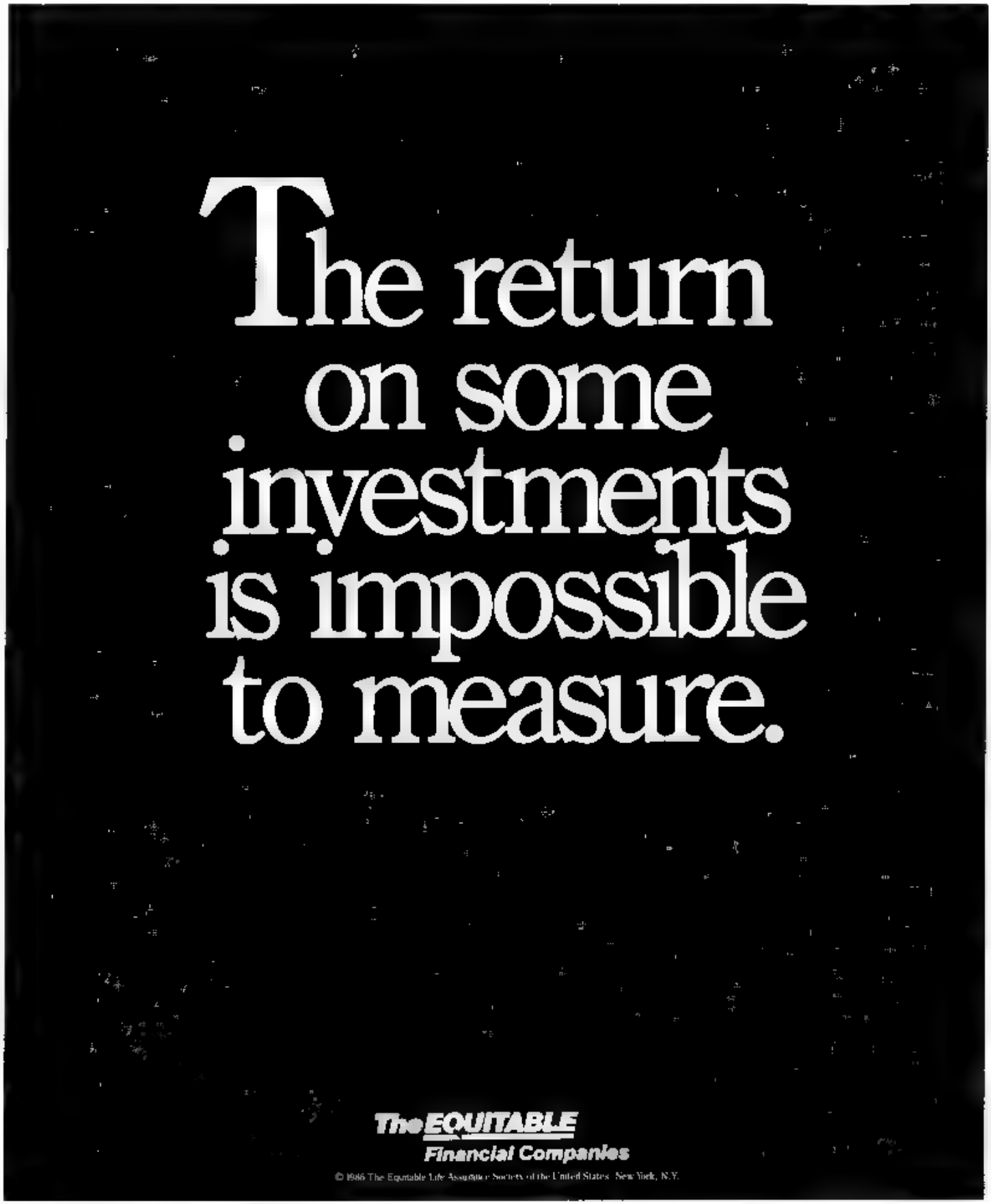


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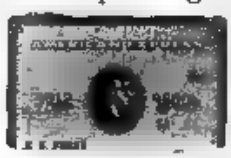
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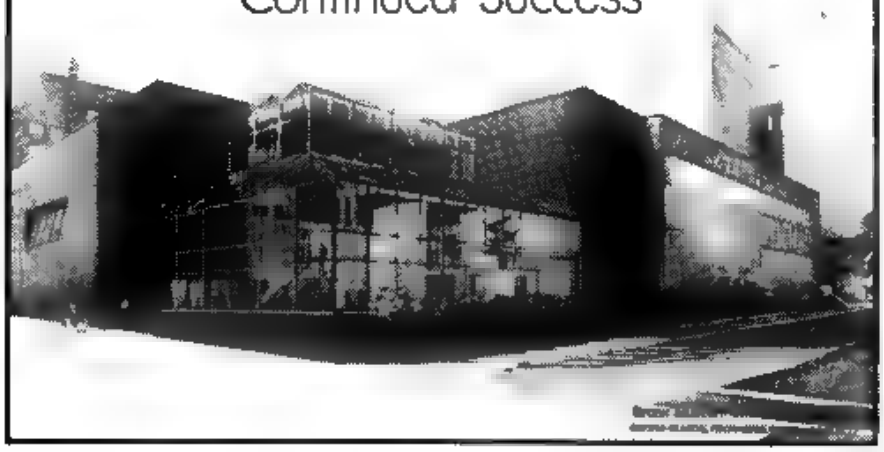
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on the 25th Anniversary of our movement

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